

Testimony for **HB 5541: An Act Concerning Services Provides by Dental Professionals and Certification for Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioners**

I am writing in favor of this Bill. I have been a dental hygienist for 34 years. I have worked in private practices, in the Danbury Hospital Dental Clinic, in the Danbury School District Oral Health Initiative, in the Southwest Community Health Center in Bridgeport, with Staywell Community Health Center in Waterbury, with the Connecticut Health Foundation and I am currently the Director of the Dental Hygiene Program at the University of New Haven. I believe that this bill will increase access to oral health care as well increase utilization of services offered for the thousands of uninsured and underinsured residents of Connecticut.

I envision the Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP) to be a mid-level provider who will enhance the delivery of services to the Dental Care Health Professional Shortage Areas across this state. The ADHP will be trained through a master's level curriculum. The University of Bridgeport MSDH curriculum has already been approved by the CT Higher Education with three tracks: public health, education, and clinical.

Access to oral health care for the children in Connecticut has been assisted through an increase in reimbursement levels. Utilization of oral health care in CT remains low. The ADHP will address this by increasing care provided through school based oral health program, community health dental centers and nursing homes. This is a cost effective way to address provider shortages in these facilities. The lack of providers for the Medicaid Adult population is of most concern. If the cost of providing oral health care can be decreased, emergency room visits will decrease.

I am aware that many of those who oppose the ADHP portion of the bill support the Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary (EFDA) portion. The benefits associated with the adoption of EFDA's are identical to those benefits associated with the ADHP. As stated in a recently distributed CT State Dental Association fact sheet, the EFDA's will increase efficiency, be cost effective, and increase capacity while providing a high quality of care. It also states that the EFDA's could allow the +1,300 dentists participating in the CT Dental Health Partnership the ability to treat additional underserved patients. Although I have concerns about the educational standards proposed for the EFDA certification, I believe these statements are all true. The ADHP will also increase efficiency through the provision of oral health care in school based programs, nursing homes and community health centers. The ADHP will be cost effective through the provision of high quality care by a mid-level provider. This will decrease the cost of oral health services to those who are Medicaid recipients, uninsured, underinsured, and for the tax payers who handle the burden for all of these. The ADHP will increase capacity by increasing the scope of services they provide in public health facilities.

Please support HB 5541.

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